

BANTHAN TRACKS

JOURNAL OF THE OFFICIAL **STAR WARS/LUCASFILM** FAN CLUB

THE OPTICAL DEPARTMENT

PART ONE: INTERVIEW BRUCE NICHOLSON

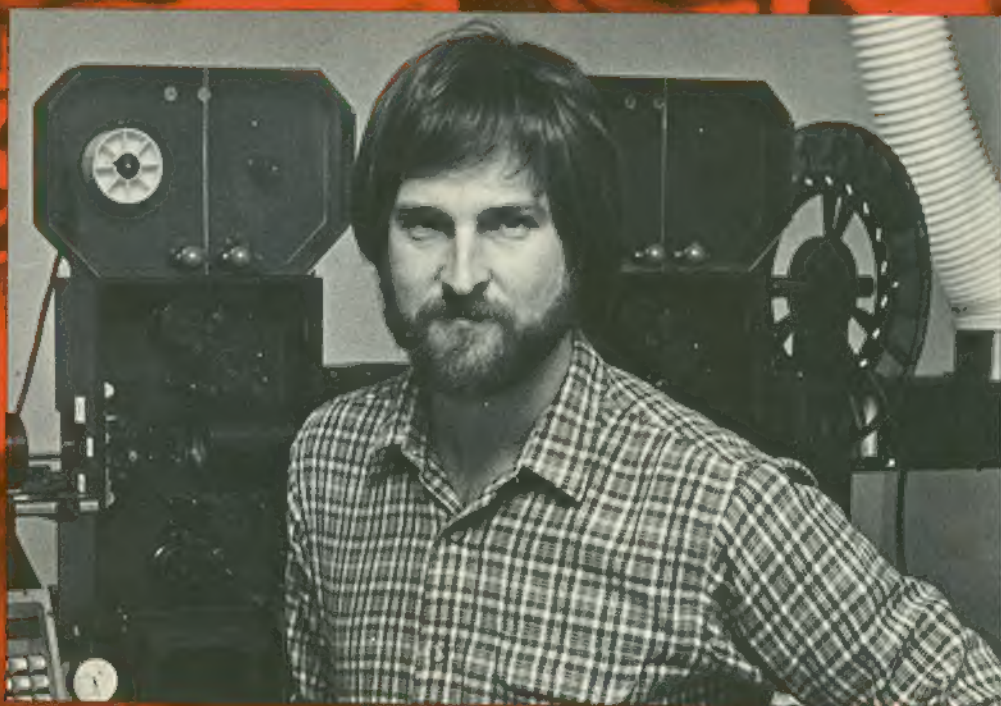
Bruce Nicholson is Supervisor of the Optical Department of Industrial Light & Magic.

In 1975, Bruce began his first job in effects at one of the oldest optical houses in Los Angeles, Ray Mercer and Company. "The equipment was primitive but I developed a good working knowledge of effects from a real

basic point of view," said Bruce, "and a lot of that knowledge translates into more sophisticated applications. Prior to that I did some animation camera work, still photography and other different jobs, but nothing that I thought would turn into a career until I got into effects work."

At the time Bruce left Ray Mercer and Company, work was gearing up on STAR WARS. Coincidentally, Lucasfilm was in need of Bruce's skills. In late 1978, George Lucas moved the effects facility to

Northern California. Bruce's filmography includes STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, DRAGONSLAYER, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, POLTERGEIST, STAR TREK II, RETURN OF THE JEDI, INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, NEVER ENDING STORY and STARMAN. He is presently working on EXPLORERS, a Paramount picture due to be released in the summer. Continued inside . . .



Kerry Nordquist

B A N T H A T R A C K S



Interview: Bruce Nicholson
(continued)

"My background has been in optical effects (composite photography)" said Bruce. "That's essentially taking all the different effects elements and putting them together into a final composite shot. The most basic tool for composite photography is the optical printer, which is a machine that allows you to combine many images into one. One of our most called-upon functions is to extract traveling mattes of blue screen subjects. The mattes are then exposed with their background so as to block exposure in the foreground area. The camera rawstock is rewound to its start and the foreground element is then exposed into the area which was rendered as black on the first pass. (See illustrations 1 through 7.)

"An optical printer consists of a camera and lens, one or two projectors and a lamp house. Such a configuration gives you a lot of flexibility. You can reposition printing elements, enlarge or reduce them, as well as pan, zoom or tilt by moving the camera in relationship to the projector. It is another photographic trick that we can take advantage of to modify action or compose elements in a shot for the desired result. Throughout my experience here, we have kept trying to expand that function so that it's more complementary to the needs of all the different departments.

"One case in point is a motion control element we shot recently for STARMAN. We wanted the Starman's spaceship to be scaled down as much as possible in comparison to the larger mother ship in frame. When it was shot on

the motion control camera, we used the widest lens possible with the camera moving all the way back on the track, yet it still wasn't small enough. We then took that same element and did a zoom on the printer, gradually reducing it to half its original size. By using this capability, we were able to achieve the desired size relationship.

"Another interesting effect was the mother ship in STARMAN. When Director John Carpenter came up to ILM to do the effects, he already had his designs worked out. Normally, the director has certain concepts which one of our art directors illustrates with storyboards. In this case, Carpenter wanted the mother ship to be a reflective object. We scratched our heads for about a month trying to figure out how to achieve this. We ended up going on location to Meteor Crater in Winslow, Arizona. We shot a helicopter plate of the crater with a fish eye lens, thinking that it would be seeing the same thing as the reflection on the ship. That was the intention.

"The ship, in certain shots, is supposed to be moving down into frame or closer to us, depending upon the point of view. When we looked at the helicopter plate and found it wasn't quite steady enough to use, we ended up taking this element and rear projecting it onto a circular-shaped screen. Next it was mounted on a motorized track and re-photographed with a motion control camera so that the ship would appear to be coming closer while the crater would appear to be expanding, which is what would

happen in a reflected ball. By motorizing the rear projection screen in relationship to the projector, we were able to get the crater to grow. Then it was composited into a background sky, and in another case, with a matte painting of Meteor Crater.

"We thought we should make the opening scene reflection more interesting than just a chrome ship reflecting stars. It should reflect a celestial body or something else as well. Charlie Mullen in Animation provided a black plexiglass ball and just started lighting it to see if he could produce a reflective-looking surface. An 8 x 10 transparency was shot with a large still camera. It was then airbrushed and re-photographed as a match move to other previously shot stage elements."

The entire principle of motion pictures is based on persistence of vision. Film is really a series of still images. When a viewer sees those images projected at a certain rate, the viewer makes up the difference in those frames so that the illusion of motion is created. Numerous experiments were done by Edison and others to find out what frame rate would create the proper illusion. They standardized the rate at 24 frames per second.

"Here at ILM, we rarely shoot 24 frames per second," commented Bruce. "When we do a motion control shot, or a composite, or when we're shooting a matte painting, it's based on the illusion created by 24 frames per second. When you shoot somebody running across frame at 24 frames per second you get a certain amount of blur. We try to create the same

Indiana Jones mine water composite elements



1—Matte Painters Frank Ordaz and Caroleen Green paint a backing which will extend the apparent depth of the miniature cliff set.



2—The miniature cliff set with painting and water, to which live action figures will be added.

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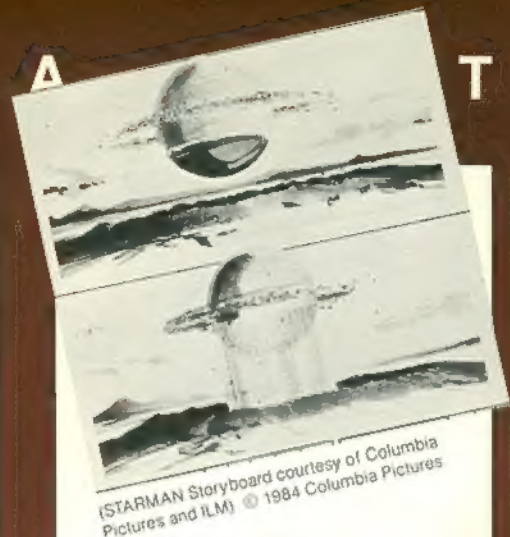
3—Willy and Short Round shot against blue screen, perform as if they are edging their way along the cliff face (mylar is laid under them in order to pull an accurate matte of their feet).

B A N T H A T R A C K S

illusion when we're doing motion control or stop motion.

"To create a little blur in each frame, we have the camera or subject move while it is exposing. If you were shooting a live subject, they wouldn't stop each frame, they'd be continuously moving. Therefore, when the shutter is open it would record a certain amount of movement which would be a blur and blurring is part of the illusion that makes persistence of vision work.

"Some of the early stop motion movies by Ray Harryhausen look artificial because of lack of blur. The viewing audience has accepted the fact that there is a certain amount of blur in motion picture photography and if they don't see it in special effects, they generally don't believe what they're seeing.



(STARMAN Storyboard courtesy of Columbia Pictures and ILM) © 1984 Columbia Pictures

"ILM has applied the technology of motion control to stop motion. By having an animated puppet controlled by motors interfaced with a computer, one is able to program stop motion movement as well as blur. The result comes much closer to simulating what the actual movement would look like if filmed at 24 frames per second.

"My main concern is quality control. I measure the negative of all blue screen elements on a Densitometer. A Densitometer measures the reciprocal of light transmission, or density. It is also used for calibrating the printers to a

specific exposure level. That exposure is based on the color grey. Grey is composed of equal amounts of red, green and blue. In the world of photography, the device which is used to assist the photographer in determining proper color balance and exposure to a given light source is called an 18% grey card. It essentially determines if the color balance is correct based on the principles of the Densitometer. To get balanced light, the optical printer has to be able to reproduce standard grey. If it can do that, it can reproduce any color. That is one way we can control printing exposure.

"There are certain types of film stock where grey reads to a particular balance. These pre-established standards are called aims. The Densitometer can be used to balance exposure to these aims. If the film is printed askew from these aims, you will not get correct reproduction of your color and brightness. Optical or composite work cannot be done without this instrument.

"I watch each step in the process to make sure that the blue screen exposures, for example, are correct and the elements are staying within certain parameters. If it is within those parameters, we assign it to a line-up person who sets up the film for printing and cueing. The optical printer operator prints a selected negative section to be used in the shot the editor has decided upon.



(STARMAN Storyboard courtesy of Columbia Pictures and ILM) © 1984 Columbia Pictures

Kerry Nordquist

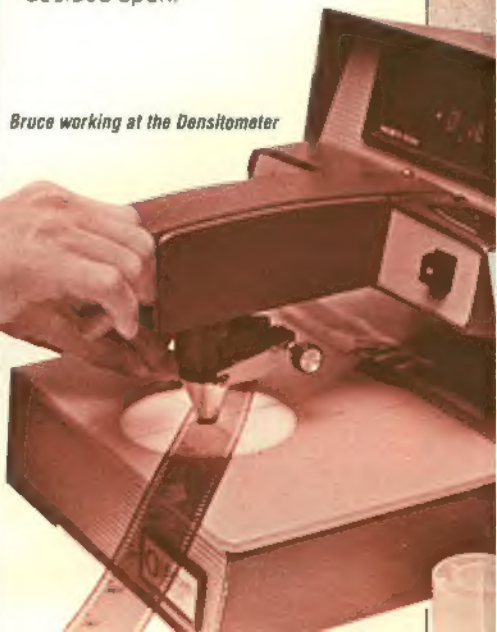


4—Indy climbs a pipe rig in front of blue screen. The pipe rig is removed through articulated and/or hand drawn matting and the shadow on the right is extracted to be used later against cliff face miniature.



5—The shadow elements used in final composite.

Bruce working at the Densitometer





"Count sheets are written up with an exposure indicated for printing intermediate elements. Black and white elements are processed at ILM; color elements are sent out to the lab. The intermediate elements then go back to the line-up people to be set up for what we call exposure tests or color wedging. From there it goes to our composite printers where each individual subject is color wedged on duplicate negative film. The color wedge will come back from the lab the next day as a print. On the light table it is evaluated for color balance, and decisions are made whether to diffuse, reposition or alter exposure. Then the final composite is ready to be optically printed.

"Special effects were done before optical printing existed. NAPOLEON, by Abel Gance, is a good example of early in-the-camera composite work. That picture was made in the mid-1920s. The process was very risky. As a result, composite printing came along as a way of reducing the risk and being able to balance out the elements in a laboratory later in post-production.

"A technical area in film is hard to study for," Bruce replied. "The industry is unionized and a degree does not necessarily gain one entrance. You start out in a basic job and learn through experience. Classes help, of course, because they enhance your knowledge, but the basic skills are really acquired

through experience or on-the-job training. You have to love working in film and be devoted enough that you are willing to make certain sacrifices and take certain risks particularly when you are first starting out."

Bantha Tracks 28 will continue this topic with the other crew members who make up the ILM Optical Department.

PERSISTENCE OF VISION

The eye momentarily retains an image of an object even after the object is removed from view.

This is the principle of the PERSISTENCE OF VISION. Known since ancient times, it was rediscovered in 1824 by the English scientist Peter Mark Roget, who also compiled the popular Thesaurus. His experiments led to the development of a wealth of ingenious optical toys, including the Thaumatrope, the Zoetrope or Daedalum and the Praxinoscope, all attempting to reconstitute motion. The THAUMATROPE, or 'turning wonder' was perhaps the first optical amusement employing the principle of the persistence of vision. It claimed to "illustrate the seeming paradox of seeing an object which is out of sight and to demonstrate the facility of the retina of the eye to retain the



Side 1



Side 2

impression of an object after its disappearance." It was a mere cardboard disk, with holes punched and strings tied at opposite points on its circumference. When the strings were twisted and pulled, the spinning disk appeared to show both sides at once. (An even simpler illustration of this same phenomenon is the way in which a coin spinning on its edge appears to show both sides simultaneously.) Early optical toys such as this led to the development of motion pictures.

To make your own Thaumatrope and PUT WICKET NEXT TO PRINCESS LEIA, cut out or trace the disks, as well as a thin cardboard disk of the same size. Glue Princess Leia to the front of the cardboard disk. Then, being careful to match up the little guidelines at the top and bottom, glue the upside-down image of Wicket to the reverse of the cardboard disk. Punch holes, tie strings, twist, and pull (or just roll strings between thumbs and forefingers) to see superimposed images of Wicket standing beside Princess Leia. The Force is with you! Now you can create other images in the same way with your own pictures.



6--The hold out matte used to prevent double-exposure of Indy and the cliff face.



7--The final composite.

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NOTE: SINCE WE LIMIT SPACE FOR SPECIAL PRODUCTS AND PLACE A GREATER EMPHASIS ON BT CONTENT, WE HAVEN'T PROVIDED PHOTOS OF EACH SPECIAL PRODUCT IN EACH ISSUE. IF YOU DON'T REMEMBER WHAT SOME OF THE PRODUCTS LOOK LIKE, SEND A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE (SASE) TO THE FAN CLUB IN SAN RAFAEL AND WE'LL MAIL YOU A SPECIAL PRODUCT BROCHURE.

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	B	Big Boy's	16 18 20		\$35.95	\$36.95	\$37.95	
	W	Women's	S M L		\$35.95	\$36.95	\$37.95	
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THX

The audience is listening...

In the mid-1950s, before the word 'stereophonic' was in the vernacular, the best place to hear recorded sound was not at home, but in the big roadshow motion picture theatres. There, sound was very much a part of the theatrical experience, and people would go to the movies to see 'big' pictures with 'big' sound. By the mid-60s, however, some high fidelity systems were available with greater frequency range and better octave-to-octave musical balance than could be heard in motion picture theatres. In the early '70s, the introduction of equalization and Dolby Stereo promised to bring theatre sound systems more sophistication. It also, however, made the deficiencies of the standard theatre loudspeaker systems more recognizable.

The THX Sound System was designed by Tomlinson Holman, Chief Audio Engineer at Lucasfilm Ltd., and represents the first serious advance in motion picture loudspeaker systems in 35 years. A great deal of new technology has entered the field of loudspeaker design in the last few years. Drawing on the most appropriate of these developments, Holman was able to make the THX Sound System better than ordinary sound systems while considering practicality. The audience will appreciate sound quality that surpasses home entertainment systems in excellence. Lucasfilm Ltd.'s THX Sound System brings this level of quality to motion picture theatre presentation.

Why Lucasfilm Ltd. developed the THX System . . .

As a motion picture producer, Lucasfilm Ltd. has developed some of the most advanced production techniques and technology used in moviemaking today. We, therefore, have a special commitment to quality, including the quality of presentation in the theatre—we want the audience to see and hear all that we put into our films. The THX Sound System is a direct result

of our continuing research into all aspects of motion picture production and presentation. THX was originally designed for use in professional dubbing stages and screening rooms. It was later adapted for use in commercial theatres. We believe that every film and audience deserves the best our industry has to offer.

What is the THX System?

The THX motion picture loudspeaker system can be used with either format: 35mm or 70mm, in either stereo or monaural sound.

It is based on a comprehensive design philosophy that considers a theatre's design and equipment as a complete sound system. A THX Sound System consists of:

- New loudspeaker drivers incorporating the latest advances in technology.
- A new, proprietary electronic crossover network designed and built by Lucasfilm Ltd., to take full advantage of the benefits of bi-amplification (powering low-frequency and high-frequency units separately).
- An installation technique for the screen speakers that smooths the octave-to-octave balance.
- A high, but practical set of standards incorporating the sound system, projection standards, and theatre acoustics.



THX Sound System Installation Sites

CALIFORNIA

Westwood

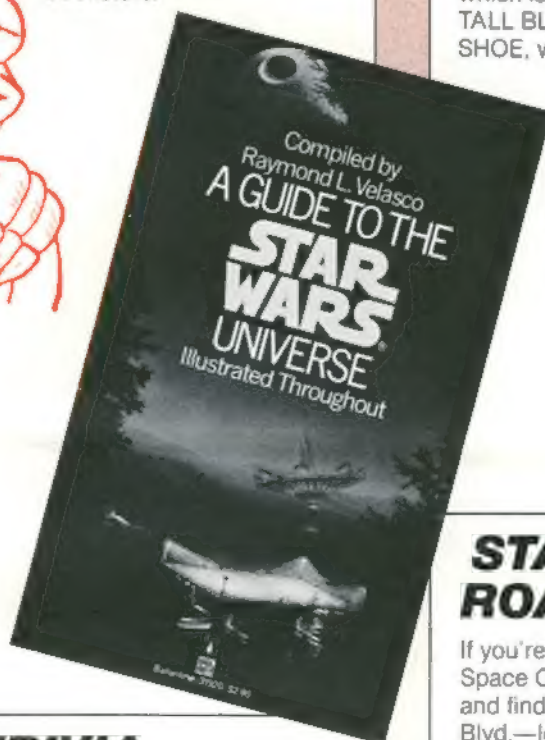
UA Coronet Theatre #1 and #2
UA Egyptian Westwood Theatre
Mann's National Theatre
Avco Center Cinema Theatre #1

A GUIDE TO THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE

Compiled by Raymond L. Velasco

This illustrated dictionary lists approximately 800 names of characters, places and things from all three STAR WARS films and more than 20 publications. From Alderaan to Yavin, Chrysopaz to Krayt Dragons, this is the indispensable guide to the fantastic saga created by George Lucas.

Available at your local bookstore.



TRIVIA

"So it went on, case after case. Very few of the contactees were actually lying or insane; most of them sincerely believed their own stories, and retained that belief even under hypnosis. And some were just victims of practical jokes or improbable accidents—like the unlucky amateur archeologists who found the props that a celebrated science-fiction moviemaker had abandoned in the Tunisian desert almost four decades earlier."

—2010: ODYSSEY TWO

Arthur C. Clarke
(page 167, hardbound edition)

San Francisco

Galaxy Theatre #1 and #2

Buena Park

UA Buena Park 8 Theatre #2

Los Angeles

Mann's Bruin Theatre

Mann's Village Theatre

Hollywood

Mann's Chinese Theatre #1, #2 and #3

TEXAS

Amarillo

UA Cinema 6 Theatre #1

Dallas

UA South 8 Theatre #4 and #5

UA Prestonwood Creek Theatre

#1 and #5

UA Skillman 6 Theatre #3

UA Walnut Hill Cinema 6 Theatre #3

Northpark Cinema Theatre #1

Ft. Worth

UA Hulen 6 Theatre #3

White Settlement

UA Las Vegas Trail 8 #4 and #5

Hurst

UA Cinema 6 Theatre #1

Beaumont

UA Phelan 6 Theatre #1

Mesquite

UA Towneast 6 Theatre #4

Towneast Theatre

Austin

Southpark Cinema 3

TENNESSEE

Knoxville

UA East Town 8 Theatre

COLORADO

Denver

Mann's Century 21 Theatre

ARIZONA

Phoenix

Mann's Christown Fiveplex Theatre #3

NEW JERSEY

West Orange

Essex Green Cinema Theatre #1

MINNESOTA

Roseville

Har Mar Cinema Theatre #1

VIRGINIA

Springfield Cinema #1

ILLINOIS

Lombard

Yorktown Cinema Theatre #1

CAST UPDATE

MARK HAMILL starred in a new musical, HARRIGAN & HART, which had a smashing summer run in Connecticut. "It was one of the best experiences of my life. I'd do it all over again," said Mark. He's now looking at many challenging opportunities in movies, plays and more musicals.

HARRISON FORD has completed filming WITNESS, a Paramount picture directed by Peter Weir, which has now been released across the country.

CARRIE FISHER has finished shooting two films; GARBO TALKS, which is now in release, and THE TALL BLOND MAN WITH ONE RED SHOE, which also stars John Belushi and Dabney Coleman. Carrie is now working on Woody Allen's latest film TRAFFIC, which is being filmed in New York.

STAR WARS ROAD THINGY

If you're planning a trip to the NASA Space Center in Houston, Texas, and find yourself on Space Center Blvd.—look for Skywalker Drive!



Jacqueline Williams

LEF NEWS

JIM HENSON AND GEORGE LUCAS TO UNITE ON NEW FILM PROJECT FOR TRI-STAR PICTURES



Two of the most successful fantasy filmmakers of all time, Jim Henson and George Lucas, have joined together on a new feature film project entitled LABYRINTH for release by Tri-Star Pictures.

Jim Henson will direct the film and George Lucas will serve as Executive Producer. LABYRINTH is envisioned as a new form of fantasy film, which will feature humans as well as an entirely new family of creatures designed especially for this film.

"I am delighted to be working with George Lucas," Jim Henson said, "as I've always had the greatest regard for his work. I am also extremely pleased to be associated with Tri-Star again since we had such a happy and successful relationship on THE MUPPETS TAKE MANHATTAN."

At the time of announcement George Lucas said, "LABYRINTH is an exciting new fantasy project, and I think Jim Henson and I will make a great team."

Tri-Star Pictures has worldwide theatrical distribution rights and certain other rights.

Principal photography will begin in April of 1985 at the EMI/Elstree Studios in London. Post-production will be done at Lucasfilm's Sprocket Systems, with special effects by Industrial Light & Magic. A domestic release is targeted for summer of 1986.

NEWSFLASH! LUCASFILM LTD. TO DEVELOP NEW ATTRACTIONS FOR DISNEYLAND



The first project will be an innovative ride based on STAR WARS. It will utilize state-of-the-art technologies never before seen in a Disney park. This will be the first non-Disney based attraction ever asked to join the park. The ride will open at Disneyland in Anaheim in June 1986. BANTHA TRACKS will keep you informed about this exciting project.

Remember, "When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are." And, "May the Force be with you . . . Always!"

ILM UPDATE

The effects crews at Industrial Light & Magic are hard at work on films that audiences will be seeing this summer and at Christmas, 1985. For summer, ILM's work will be featured in *EXPLORERS*, a Paramount picture directed by Joe Dante, who directed *GREMLINS*; *COCOON*, a 20th Century Fox picture directed by Ron Howard, who directed *SPLASH*; *GOONIES*, a Warner Brothers picture directed by Richard Donner, who directed *SUPERMAN*; and *BACK TO THE FUTURE*, a Universal picture directed by Robert Zemeckis, who directed *ROMANCING THE STONE*.

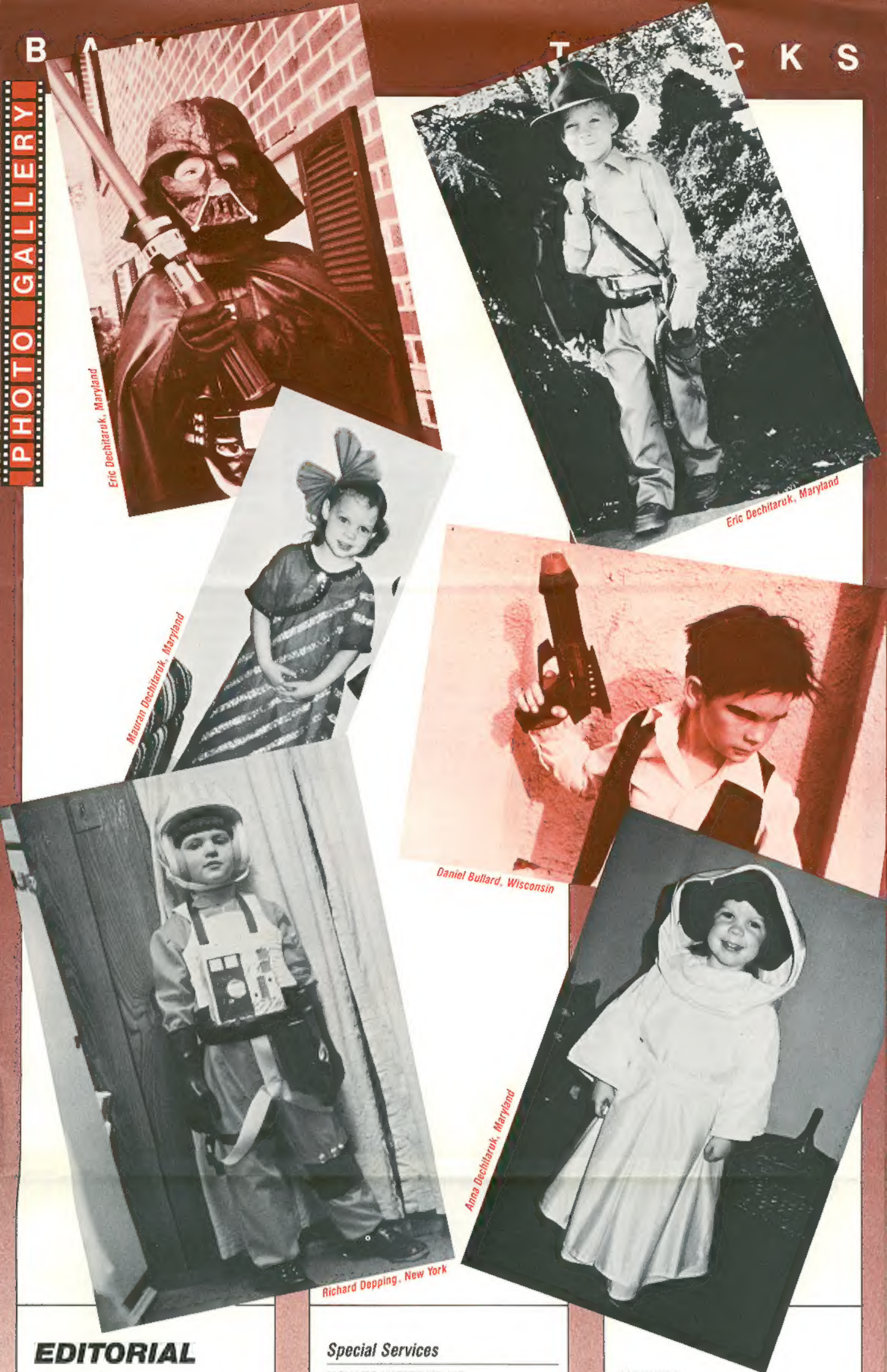
For the Christmas season, ILM is working on *ENEMY MINE*, a 20th Century Fox film directed by Wolfgang Peterson, who directed *DAS BOOT* and *THE NEVER ENDING STORY*, and *YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES*, a Paramount picture directed by Barry Levinson, who directed *DINER* and *THE NATURAL*. (Without a doubt, the hottest films of 1985 will feature ILM visual effects—the biased opinion of BANTHA TRACKS.)

ILM will also be part of a British Broadcasting Corporation documentary about the visual effects process that will be aired in the spring on Public Broadcasting Stations. Tentatively entitled, *THE IMAGE ENGINEERS*, the program

will concentrate on the people, planning and techniques employed in putting an effects shot together.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences invited six films to present their special effects for consideration in the Visual Effects category of the Academy Awards for 1984. Of the six, *INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM* features the special effects work of ILM.





EDITORIAL

Dear Members:

Many of you wrote in to thank us for our coverage on Lucasfilm's participation at the 1984 World Science Fiction Convention. As you know, reporting the myriad events which in some way embrace the world of Lucasfilm productions is one of BT's primary purposes. And we are always looking for new avenues of expression.

This issue premieres a section entitled CAST AND CREW NEWS. Future BT's will carry this section whenever new information concerning the cast and crew is available. This issue features information about Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford. Also, in this issue the Art Gallery page becomes the Photo Gallery. We'll probably alternate between the two in future issues. Another column featured in this issue which will appear in future BT's is the TRIVIA section.

We would appreciate hearing from you about your unique experiences or discoveries as STAR WARS and other Lucasfilm productions become more and more a part of our culture. May the Force be with you always!

Maureen Garrett, Director
STAR WARS/LUCASFILM
Fan Club

Special Services

HOW TO WRITE TO US

Letters to the editor, pen pal forms, cast and crew fan mail, requests for SPFX, THX update, modelmaking, costume guidelines, science fiction convention, and club info: Official STAR WARS/Lucasfilm Fan Club, P.O. Box 2202, San Rafael, CA 94912 U.S.A.

VERY, VERY IMPORTANT!

Many times it is impossible to respond to letters because people forget to tell us who they are, so please remember to include your name, address and force number each time you write to us. Whenever possible, for a faster response, please enclose a SASE with your letter of inquiry.

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To receive a pen pal form send a long self-addressed and stamped envelope to the Fan Club address. Please write Pen Pal on the outer envelope.

CAST AND CREW FAN MAIL FORWARDING

If you wish to write a letter to the members of the cast and/or crew of any Lucasfilm production, address the letter to that person in care of our address. For example, if you wish to write to Mark Hamill, address the envelope as follows: Mark Hamill, c/o OSW/LFLFC, P.O. Box 2202, San Rafael, CA 94912 U.S.A. If you wish to write to more than one actor write a letter to each separately. Be sure to put your address in the body of the letter, not just on the envelope. We will do our best to make sure the particular person or their representative see it. However, we are not able to promise you an answer to your letter.

MOVING?

Don't miss out. Be sure to notify: Official STAR WARS/Lucasfilm Fan Club, P.O. Box 163, Mt. Morris, IL 61054, U.S.A. Please include your OLD address (the information on your BANTHA TRACKS label) and your NEW address. PLEASE ALLOW 6 WEEKS FOR CHANGE OVER.

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Force Numbers

Your current force number is above your name on the mailing label. It starts with your zip code followed by a string of letters and numbers from your name and address. UK/European members—your force number is a seven digit number.

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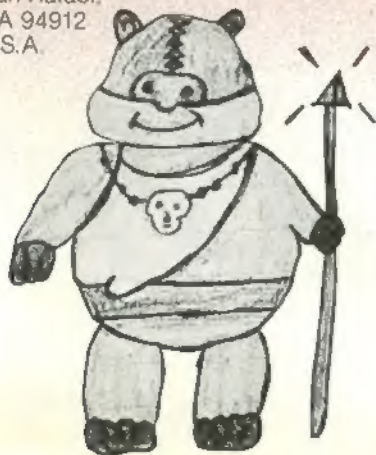
Metaphors be with you.

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Preview of Spring '85 Issue

Random drawing contest! One hundred names will be drawn from all the names submitted. Watch for the special entry form in the next issue of B.T.

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